

Museum Around the Corner

The Georgetown County Historical Society Museum

Peter Horry ©

Peter Horry, dear childhood friend of General Francis Marion, thought he was probably born on March 12, 1743 or maybe 1744. He was sure he was born in Georgetown County, though. His father was Elias Horry who came to this area with other Huguenot brethren. Peter's brother, Hugh Horry was also a fighter with Marion. Fighting side by side at Fort Moultrie, they shared in the joy of victory over the British. When the British later took Charleston on May 12, 1780, Horry and Marion escaped capture. Horry had been furloughed home in a lull of military action. Marion escaped capture at Charleston by being in recuperation from a broken ankle incurred a week before. He was in attendance at a gentlemen's party at 106 Tradd Street in Charleston. The social custom was to lock all the doors and pocket the key until all the liquor was consumed. Marion, being a sober sort, sneaked away to the second floor and escaped through a window, but fell awkwardly, injuring the ankle. Miraculously, he wasn't in Charleston when it fell.

Peter Horry was described with red hair, weighing 300 pounds, and had difficulty staying in the saddle of his horse. He was unable to swim due to his weight. He was a wealthy slave owner working the land he named Belle Isle, south of Georgetown. When trying to speak in public, he became stressed which resulted in a stammer, or speech impediment. One story goes that when leading his troops in battle he had difficulty getting the word, "Fire!" out, and resorted to, "Dammit, shoot 'em".

After the fall of Charleston, Horry and Marion organized Marion's Brigade. Colonel Horry and Major John James were two of Marion's leading officers and commanded a regiment of Cavalry Volunteers. Although Horry and Marion sometimes disagreed, they always remained friends. Horry was sometimes angered in being passed over for promotion when others he felt less deserving received more attention. Marion sometimes found himself as a mediator in these rather frivolous incidents, but he recognized the necessity of keeping peace among his men of fragile egos. Late in the war, when Marion attended the legislature at Jacksonborough, he left Horry in command of his brigade. In the meantime, General Nathanael Greene had created two battalions of light cavalry, one commanded by Horry and the other by Hezekiah Maham. Since their new commissions as lieutenant colonels bore the same date, a feud developed between the two men, one result of which was the defeat of Marion's brigade in late February 1782 at Wambaw Bridge. After the two regiments were consolidated under Maham, Horry was appointed commandant at Georgetown, a port vital to Greene's army.

In March of 1782, his unit was disbanded due to heavy losses at the battles of Wambaw Bridge and Tidyman's Plantation, and the few men left were transferred to Colonel Hezekiah Maham's SC 3rd Regiment of State Dragoons. Colonel Peter Horry was given command of Georgetown,

but he soon resigned for good and went home. After the War, Horry was promoted to Brigadier General. He was very despondent after the war, but was proud of his part in saving South Carolina from the British.

He retired from the militia in 1806. A member of the Society of the Cincinnati, Horry collected a sizable archive of war documents and letters. He gave them to Mason Locke "Parson" Weems, fresh from his popular, but contrived, biography of George Washington. Weems took so many liberties in writing the *Life of Marion* (1809) that Horry disassociated himself from the work.

Besides Horry's home on Belle Isle, he had a house in Georgetown and a beach home at Debordieu Island, just north of North Island. His wife was Margaret Guignard from Columbia whom he married in 1793. The General died in 1814 in Columbia. We know that by 1819, Mrs. Horry was deceased through a newspaper notice of February 13, 1819 that read, "Ladies Benevolent Society vs. Executors of Mary Margaret Horry, deceased. Bill of Sale for property, lot and land in Browntown, formerly residence of Gen. Peter Horry with dwelling house and outbuildings." It is not known where this house stood.

Belle Isle Plantation enjoyed a panorama of Winyah Bay on its eastern boundary. Live oaks, centuries old at the time of General Horry's residence shaded the colonial mansion and grounds. The view across the bay showed Fraser's Point, the terminus of the King's Highway on the Waccamaw Neck. General Horry could observe travelers, which may have included George Washington in 1791, being ferried across the expanse to Georgetown.

Peter Horry served in both the SC House of Representatives and Senate and as Register of the Mesne Conveyances for Charleston County. In tribute to Horry's service, Horry County was reconstructed from Georgetown District and named in his honor (1801). Peter Horry died in Columbia in 1815 and is buried at Trinity Episcopal Church.